

HOUSE BILL NO. 104

INTRODUCED BY K. FUREY

BY REQUEST OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING THE GROUND WATER EXEMPTION FROM PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS; AMENDING SECTIONS 85-2-113 AND 85-2-306, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 85-2-113, MCA, is amended to read:

"85-2-113. Department powers and duties. (1) The department may prescribe fees or service charges for any public service rendered by the department under this chapter, including fees for the filing of applications or for the issuance of permits and certificates, for rulemaking hearings under 85-2-319, for administrative hearings conducted under this chapter, for investigations concerning permit revocation, for field verification of issued and completed permits, and for all change approvals. There may not be fees for any action taken by the department at the request of the water judge or for the issuance of certificates of existing rights.

(2) The department may adopt rules necessary to implement and carry out the purposes and provisions of this chapter. These rules may include but are not limited to rules to:

(a) govern the issuance and terms of interim permits authorizing an applicant for a regular permit under this chapter to begin appropriating water immediately, pending final approval or denial by the department of the application for a regular permit;

(b) require the owner or operator of appropriation facilities to install and maintain suitable controlling and measuring devices, except that the department may not require a meter on a water well outside of a controlled ground water area or proposed controlled ground water area unless the maximum appropriation of the well is in excess of the limitation contained in 85-2-306 that was in effect when the water was appropriated;

(c) require the owner or operator of appropriation facilities to report to the department the readings of measuring devices at reasonable intervals and to file reports on appropriations; and

(d) regulate the construction, use, and sealing of wells to prevent the waste, contamination, or pollution of ground water.



1 (3) The department shall adopt rules providing for and governing temporary emergency appropriations,
2 without prior application for a permit, necessary to protect lives or property.

3 (4) (a) The department shall adopt rules to require the owner or operator of an appropriation facility on
4 a watercourse or portions of a watercourse identified as chronically dewatered by the department under 85-2-150
5 to acquire, install, and maintain a suitable controlling and measuring device no later than 2 years after designation
6 of the watercourse or portions of the watercourse as chronically dewatered, except that when the department
7 specifically finds that the installation of measuring devices along the entire watercourse or portions of the
8 watercourse is not practicable within the 2-year deadline, it may establish a later deadline.

9 (b) For the purposes of this subsection (4), an appropriation facility includes but is not limited to any
10 method used to divert, impound, or withdraw water from a watercourse. Hydroelectric facilities that are using
11 recognized methods of flow measurement, as determined by the department, are in compliance with this
12 subsection (4)."

13

14 **Section 2.** Section 85-2-306, MCA, is amended to read:

15 **"85-2-306. Exceptions to permit requirements.** (1) Ground water may be appropriated only by a
16 person who has a possessory interest in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use and exclusive
17 property rights in the ground water development works or, if another person has rights in the ground water
18 development works, with the written consent of the person with those property rights. If the person does not have
19 a possessory interest in the real property from which the ground water may be appropriated, the person shall
20 provide to the owner of the real property written notification of the works and the person's intent to appropriate
21 ground water from the works. The written notification must be provided to the landowner at least 30 days prior
22 to constructing any associated works or, if no new or expanded works are proposed, 30 days prior to
23 appropriating the water. The written notification under this subsection is a notice requirement only and does not
24 create an easement in or over the real property where the ground water development works are located.

25 (2) Inside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, ground water may be appropriated only:

26 (a) according to a permit received pursuant to 85-2-508; or

27 (b) according to the requirements of an order issued pursuant to 85-2-507.

28 (3) (a) Outside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, a permit is not required before
29 appropriating ground water;

30 (i) by means of a well or developed spring for stock water use on a parcel of land that is owned by or

1 under the control of the applicant and that is 40 acres or larger with a maximum appropriation of 35 gallons a
2 minute or less, not to exceed 10 acre-feet a year, ~~except that a; or~~

3 (ii) by means of a well for domestic use or commercial use with a maximum appropriation of 35 gallons
4 a minute or less, not to exceed 1 acre-foot a year. Lawn and garden uses associated with a domestic use or a
5 commercial use may not exceed one-quarter acre of land.

6 (b) A combined appropriation from the same source from two or more wells or developed springs
7 occurring under either subsection (3)(a)(i) or (3)(a)(ii) that exceeds the respective limitation of that subsection
8 exceeding this limitation requires a permit.

9 ~~(b)(c)~~ (i) Within 60 days of completion of the well or developed spring and appropriation of the ground
10 water for beneficial use, the appropriator shall file a notice of completion with the department on a form provided
11 by the department through its offices.

12 (ii) Upon receipt of the notice, the department shall review the notice and may, before issuing a certificate
13 of water right, return a defective notice for correction or completion, together with the reasons for returning it. A
14 notice does not lose priority of filing because of defects if the notice is corrected, completed, and refiled with the
15 department within 30 days of notification of defects or within a further time as the department may allow, not to
16 exceed 6 months.

17 (iii) If a notice is not corrected and completed within the time allowed, the priority date of appropriation
18 is the date of refiled a correct and complete notice with the department.

19 ~~(c)(d)~~ A certificate of water right may not be issued until a correct and complete notice has been filed with
20 the department, including proof of landowner notification as necessary under subsection (1). The original of the
21 certificate must be sent to the appropriator. The department shall keep a copy of the certificate in its office in
22 Helena. The date of filing of the notice of completion is the date of priority of the right.

23 (4) An appropriator of ground water by means of a well or developed spring first put to beneficial use
24 between January 1, 1962, and July 1, 1973, who did not file a notice of completion, as required by laws in force
25 prior to April 14, 1981, with the county clerk and recorder shall file a notice of completion, as provided in
26 subsection (3), with the department to perfect the water right. The filing of a claim pursuant to 85-2-221 is
27 sufficient notice of completion under this subsection. The priority date of the appropriation is the date of the filing
28 of a notice, as provided in subsection (3), or the date of the filing of the claim of existing water right.

29 (5) An appropriation under subsection (4) is an existing right, and a permit is not required. However, the
30 department shall acknowledge the receipt of a correct and complete filing of a notice of completion, except that

1 for an appropriation of 35 gallons a minute or less, not to exceed 10 acre-feet a year, the department shall issue
2 a certificate of water right. If a certificate is issued under this section, a certificate need not be issued under the
3 adjudication proceedings provided for in 85-2-236.

4 (6) A permit is not required before constructing an impoundment or pit and appropriating water for use
5 by livestock if:

6 (a) the maximum capacity of the impoundment or pit is less than 15 acre-feet;

7 (b) the appropriation is less than 30 acre-feet a year;

8 (c) the appropriation is from a source other than a perennial flowing stream; and

9 (d) the impoundment or pit is to be constructed on and will be accessible to a parcel of land that is owned
10 or under the control of the applicant and that is 40 acres or larger.

11 (7) Within 60 days after constructing an impoundment or pit, the appropriator shall apply for a permit as
12 prescribed by this part. Upon receipt of a correct and complete application for a stockwater provisional permit,
13 the department shall automatically issue a provisional permit. If the department determines after a hearing that
14 the rights of other appropriators have been or will be adversely affected, it may revoke the permit or require the
15 permittee to modify the impoundment or pit and may then make the permit subject to terms, conditions,
16 restrictions, or limitations that it considers necessary to protect the rights of other appropriators.

17 ~~(8) A person may also appropriate water without applying for or prior to receiving a permit under rules~~
18 ~~adopted by the department under 85-2-113."~~

19
20 NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Saving clause.** [This act] does not affect rights and duties that matured,
21 penalties that were incurred, or proceedings that were begun before [the effective date of this act].

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23 NEW SECTION. **Section 4. Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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